

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY MET  
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON 17 JUNE 2009.**

**THE HON BRYAN GREEN MP**, CHAIR, TASMANIAN ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL, AND **Ms PENNY NICHOLLS**, GENERAL MANAGER, LAND TRANSPORT AND SAFETY DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, ENERGY AND RESOURCES, WERE CALLED AND EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** (Mr Wing) - Mr Green, thank you very much for being here. As Chairman of the Road Safety Council, could we start by asking you to give us an overview of who is on your council, your main emphasis at the moment and any measures that have been recently taken, your assessment of the effectiveness of them and any contemplated.

**Mr GREEN** - Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before the committee. From a personal point of view, and I can certainly say the Road Safety Council's point of view, we are always pleased to have the spotlight to focus on road safety. We want to ensure that it is front and centre of every person's mind. The central message we always try to convey is that road safety is every person's responsibility. As you mentioned earlier, it is quite timely that you are having this hearing and we are very pleased to participate. Penny Nicholls, who is the General Manager of the Land Transport and Safety Division is with me today. She effectively has responsibility for all the administration associated with the Road Safety Council and any matters pertaining to the budget and other areas that you might want to talk about. Penny will answer those more technical questions.

The Road Safety Council has been in place for a period of time now. I do not have the exact period of time in front of me, but it was established in the first place to ensure that there was community involvement in decision making, or at least providing advice back to the minister, so that we were in a position as a community effectively to stay on track with respect to a strategic approach to road safety. I think it would be fair to say, by the representation on the committee and the work that they have been involved in, that to a large degree that strategic approach has worked and is worthwhile. I will perhaps talk about that in a little more detail in a moment.

The Road Safety Council is made up of myself as the chairperson; Mike Brazendale, who is the Acting Assistant Commissioner for Tasmania Police; Katrena Stephenson, who is Policy Director of the Local Government Association of Tasmania; Geraldine Allen, who is a community representative from the north of the State; Penny Nicholls, the General Manager of the Land Transport and Safety Division of DIER; Dr Bruce Corbin, who is the representative from the Monash University Accident Research Centre.

**CHAIR** - We had some evidence from him when we visited Monash.

**Mr GREEN** - A very worthwhile member of the council is Vince Taskunis, who is the General Manager of Public Policy and Communications for the RACT; Shaun Lennard, who is the President of the Tasmanian Motorcycle Council; Roger Illingworth, who is

the Manager North and North West of the Magistrates Courts; and Angela Conway, who is the Manager for Land Transport and Safety Policy in DIER. It is a diverse range of community members. When people ask me the question about the Road Safety Council I tell them that it is an expert-based council that is there to provide the best advice possible to the minister with respect to our strategic approach.

We have tried to establish a policy that is for the long term because we believe - and we can talk about the statistics a little later on - what we have to do as a council and as people interested in ensuring road safety and less casualties on our roads is make sure that we concentrate on areas that we are good at or we believe that we can get the best bang in terms of our strategic thinking and investment that is making a difference. So, from the point of view of a longer-term strategy, what we are looking at is safer travel speeds as key to ensuring we continue reducing the statistics with respect to crashes and particularly serious injury crashes; best practice infrastructure - and we can talk about how that is being delivered around the State and how the road safety levy is being utilised to build on that; increased safety for young road users and novice driver reforms which has been front and centre with respect to making sure we do our utmost to have safer young drivers on our roads; and enhanced vehicle safety. All that makes up a part of our road safety action plan and the council has had the responsibility to oversee and make sure that that implementation, the money that has been allocated is expended and that there is progress with respect to all of those matters.

The key is, from our point of view, that we are taking a strategic approach; when ideas come to the council we have people involved that can talk through those issues in a sensible way and provide advice. I will give you an example, and you asked for me to mention recent decisions. We have made recommendations with respect to vehicle confiscation in recent times for people doing excessive speeds, et cetera, to make sure that we are in a position to curb that behaviour. We have been thinking about issues associated with the wearing of seatbelts, given that the statistics on road deaths in Tasmania have been high when it comes to not wearing a seatbelt.

The issue of double demerit points is also another example that has been bandied about quite a bit in recent times. The council was asked to consider whether, on weekends or around Christmas time, double demerit points be put in place. The council required advice with respect to that and work was done to allow the council to understand whether or not double demerit points would in fact be an effective measure against speeding, et cetera. The advice that was received by the council, particularly in talking to police throughout the process, was that it would not be effective. Therefore we did not recommend to the minister that change, even though making a recommendation perhaps would have been an easy thing to do from a political point of view. It highlighted to me, anyway, that the council is taking an unbiased expert view of how we can have the greatest effect on road safety.

**CHAIR** - Did that advice come only from the police?

**Mr GREEN** - No, it was based on advice from Western Australia and other States.

**CHAIR** - Victoria?

**Mr GREEN** - States where these measures have been implemented or haven't been implemented. We have also tried to make sure that we are in line with the national strategy with respect to road safety matters. We are very conscious of how other States are performing with respect to their long-term strategic views on road safety and how that's having an effect on the statistics associated with crashes and serious injury crashes. That is the statistic that we have to look at if we are to understand that we are making a difference with respect to road safety.

We have been charged with the responsibility of ensuring that we meet the Tasmanian Together targets with a 20 per cent reduction and I am pleased to report to the committee that we are on track and have been on track. Our tracking is slightly above that with respect to the reduction in serious crashes and serious injury crashes.

**CHAIR** - That is a 20 per cent reduction from when; from what base?

**Mr GREEN** - Since the implementation of the Tasmania Together.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - There were three parts to it. One was a 20 per cent reduction in 2010 from 2005, so in that five-year period; then a further 20 per cent reduction from 2010 to 2015, and a further 20 per cent from 2015 to 2020.

**CHAIR** - So that is 2005-2010, 2010-2015, 2015-2020.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - There are three parts in all.

**CHAIR** - That is both fatal and serious injuries?

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Serious injuries, which we refer to as serious casualties.

**CHAIR** - I see.

**Mr GREEN** - To isolate fatalities is pretty difficult given the relatively low number, which is of course high this year, but it's hard to get an accurate statistic to measure with respect to that. Where we know we are having an effect is when we continue to see the trend line down on serious crashes and serious injury crashes.

**CHAIR** - So this year will make your task even harder, won't it, to achieve that?

**Mr GREEN** - Not necessarily, Mr Chairman, weighed against the other serious crashes that have occurred.

**CHAIR** - I see - so serious injuries, not just fatalities.

**Mr GREEN** - An example of that is the difference with the 50 kph speed limit in urban areas and the significant reduction that we witnessed as a result of that simple measure being taken. What that has done is sharpen the focus of each and every person. It is all right to talk about reduced speeds and any effect that can have on road safety and saving people's lives and saving people from serious injury, but it becomes a stark reality when you see those reductions in urban areas having such a significant effect. That will sharpen the focus of the council and I think the community generally with respect to looking at

opportunities to continue to do that where appropriate to make sure that we continue to improve in that area.

**CHAIR** - Do you have some statistics on that issue?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - I think the Department of Infrastructure and Energy has previously provided to the committee the evaluation of the 50 kph limit but if you want, I will provide that to you again.

**CHAIR** - It is significant?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, a significant reduction.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - My memory was that it was around about the 20 per cent figure but I would like to just check that in the evaluation.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr GREEN** - Just to finish the overview, on most occasions the advice that the council provides is taken up by the minister but not necessarily always. The council works extremely well as a collective group and we have very open discussions with respect to road safety. We do not get a lot of publicity and nor do we seek it with respect to the work we are doing, except to understand that the involvement of these people is crucial in providing the necessary credibility, I think, to the advice we are providing. In my short experience with the council, even though I have been in the other position where I have accepted advice as a minister, in this position it has been very refreshing from my point of view to sit and listen to the expertise and the commitment of those people around me, and I think it is a really good model for ensuring that a minister gets the best advice possible.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Also after each meeting we place a communiqué on our Transport web site and a couple of months ago we published the first 12-monthly report of our funding and expenditure under the Road Safety net which advertised publicly in newspapers that that was available on the Transport web site. So we have some mechanisms in place to let people know what we are doing.

**CHAIR** - Could you tell us about the relationship and the apportionment of responsibilities between your council and the Road Safety Taskforce - just the roles?

**Mr GREEN** - Obviously the Road Safety Council is there to think seriously about the issues associated with road safety based on expert advice or using that expertise from around the council to make decisions to have an effect on road safety. The Road Safety Taskforce is effectively the group of people who are out there promoting and continuing to sell the message with respect to road safety to make sure that people are thinking about road safety matters all the time and being the publicity arm of the Road Safety Council.

I have just been given some advice here, Mr Chairman, which says that the Road Safety Taskforce develops public education and enforcement campaigns aimed at changing undesirable road user behaviour. Sixteen police officers are funded by the Road Safety Taskforce to undertake targeted road safety enforcement activities across the State. The Road Safety Taskforce is fully funded by the Motor Accidents Insurance Board and is delivered through DIER and Tasmania Police.

So there is a stark difference with respect to what they are doing and what we are doing. We are interested in policy matters, developing policy and making sure that Tasmanians are in the best position to have roads that are safe.

**Mr DEAN** - On that point, relying on the information that you get from your experts and so on, do you have any input into the strategies that the Road Safety Taskforce might employ or engage in, or indeed any of the strategies that Tasmania Police might engage in and be involved with? Do you look at that?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, we certainly have dialogue. I have met with Mr Hogan on a number of occasions and we have a link with the department in terms of the person responsible - I cannot think of their name now - and then it goes to the Road Safety Taskforce.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - As in Toni Sydes who is an observer.

**Mr GREEN** - In recent times we have had statistics with respect to people who have been caught with excessive blood-alcohol levels, well and truly in excess of blood-alcohol limits, which is disturbing to us given the huge campaigns that are run all the time with respect to drink-driving. Discussions were held at the time with respect to how we could have an effect from a policy point of view and how they would have an effect with respect to their advertising. You might remember that there was a new ad campaign showing, effectively, a glass half full and saying if you are not sure about whether you have had too much to drink then -

**CHAIR** - The roulette one.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, and don't drive. So there was some coordination between the two. I think that it is fair to say that just about every person is involved in thinking about road safety day in and day out and often it is a bit hard to cop the criticism because there are a lot of very dedicated people working within the department - volunteers and in a whole range of other areas - all dedicated to road safety. The commitment is certainly without question but there is certainly coordination as well.

**Mr DEAN** - Currently there is a lot of information out there, and I suspect that you are getting it in the council as well from the experts, that if more police were out and seen on the roads, the more likely drivers would be to take notice of the speed limits and comply with the road laws. I guess that message would be coming into the council strong and clear; I would be surprised if it wasn't.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - The mix of activities - covert and overt - is recognised in our Road Safety Strategy as a desirable.

**Mr DEAN** - Would you go to Tasmania Police and say, 'We would like to see a build-up in the number of police on the highway 24 hours a day'? Do you do that? Do you see that as one of your responsibilities or duties?

**Ms NICHOLLS** - A standard agenda item at Road Safety Council meetings is the acting Assistant Commissioner's report to the council on enforcement activities and strategies and under that agenda item we get to see a number of benchmarks and activities that the police have been doing. Also there is an exchange about enforcement activities and what they have done or what they have planned for the future. So I think the sort of issues that you are alluding to there get discussed under that which is the standard agenda item that we have.

**Mr GREEN** - I do not think we have directed the police to do it.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - No.

**CHAIR** - Have you requested them to have a greater visible presence?

**Mr GREEN** - No, we have not requested them to have a visible presence as such, Mr Chairman. What we have had in the past is discussions with respect to where they have been effective and where they have not been effective. The RACT and motorcycle riders and others ask some very specific questions about that information. We are relying on the police to carry out their duties in the ways that they see fit, other than that.

**CHAIR** - Are you aware that there is quite a strong public feeling that there is insufficient visible presence of the police on our roads?

**Mr GREEN** - Of course I listen to talkback radio. I hear often on talkback radio people suggesting that the police ought to be more visible. But the decisions that have been made with respect to covert and overt operations seem to me to be based on best practice advice.

**CHAIR** - Do you feel or does the council feel that there is an adequate police presence, visible presence on our roads?

**Mr GREEN** - I think if you look at the statistics with respect to the numbers of people who have been pulled over, the people who have been receiving infringement notices et cetera then you would understand that the police are having an effect. Whether a visible presence would make the sort of difference that people are suggesting it would, that is not the advice that the council has had at this stage.

**CHAIR** - Do you think they are having the right effect in the right places? You hardly ever see a police patrol vehicle on the Midland Highway except the last long weekend. A number of people have commented about how there was a significant visible presence of police. There were no fatalities that weekend, which is more than a coincidence, I would suggest.

**Mr GREEN** - You can suggest that, Mr Chairman, but I think it would require a lot more analysis than just that.

**CHAIR** - Regarding the benchmarks, statistics et cetera, have you done any investigations to see whether they are within urban areas or are on the main roads or country roads where most of the serious accidents occur?

**Mr GREEN** - I would be more than happy to share with you, I am not sure whether it is on a confidential basis but to give you an idea of the sort of discussions that the council has, just to make sure that you understand that we are being serious about this -

**CHAIR** - I do not doubt you are.

**Mr GREEN** - No. But this is effectively a public forum so I want to just make sure that people understand that we are absolutely serious about this. The information that the police provides to us is - I was going to use the word 'fulsome' but we are not allowed to use that word any more -

**Mr HARRISS** - Comprehensive.

**Mr GREEN** - It is very comprehensive. Thank you, Mr Harriss. It does take up quite a large proportion of the discussions that we have. People are always interested in the variations over time as to what is having an impact.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Again, statistics are a standard agenda item that the council will look at very closely, not only information provided to us by police but also information and analysis from our crash data manager.

**CHAIR** - Are they apportioned so you can tell whether they are within an urban area or on an open road or rural road?

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Yes. My recollection is that DIER has provided quite a bit of statistical information to the council. That is the sort of information that is sent to this select committee..

**Mr GREEN** - I would be more than happy, if we can provide it, to provide you effectively with an agenda so you can understand.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - They vary but you will get an understanding certainly as to what the standard relations are.

**Mr DEAN** - As a council, you must be concerned that the road deaths and the serious injury accidents in this State per head of population is the highest in the nation. As a council I would suggest that that would be of concern to you and therefore does that mean we need to take some fairly radical steps to try to at least reduce those numbers and to at least be able to meet the national average? What is the council's position?

**Mr GREEN** - Our endeavours are all about making sure that we minimise road trauma in this State and the policy positions that we put forward are all about trying to ensure that we change behaviour and allow people to understand that we all have a responsibility. The

statistics you are quoting with respect to us being the highest per capita, I am not disputing your advice but -

**Mr DEAN** - We were, certainly were.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - We have not been the highest. We have been down a couple but obviously our own statistics have gone up quite a bit since January to our current position.

**Mr GREEN** - There has been a national trend with respect to changes over this last year from January through May 2008 to January to May 2009.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Yes, just the first five months -

**Mr GREEN** - The first five months.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - of this financial year.

**Mr GREEN** - For example, in South Australia they have gone from 35 in that period to 59, which is a 68.6 per cent increase. In Tasmania it is 22 to 35. I hate talking about statistics in this way but it is a 59 per cent increase. There has been a drop in the Northern Territory but they have a very low statistic - 25 down to 9 which is minus 64. A lot of that could be attributed to the fact they have implemented speed limits.

There is an interesting statistic and it is one I think we want to be aiming for. Victoria - and I am sure Bruce would have talked to you about this, about their strategic approach to road safety matters - is down by 5.2 per cent - 135 to 128 over that same period. From our point of view, given that we are taking a strategic approach, we would want to see that drop. Of course we do not want to see an increase, we want to see a drop in the statistics in line with what is happening in Victoria, given they have had their strategic position in place for some time.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - And they are really reaping the benefits.

**CHAIR** - We have taken evidence in Victoria and there is a much greater emphasis there on the visible presence of police on the roads and the enforcement. Those statistics show that that is working.

**Mr GREEN** - We will await your report.

**CHAIR** - Do you have any views about why there is an increase, a very significant increase, in the number of fatalities in road crashes in Tasmania this year?

**Mr GREEN** - We have done some work with respect to trying to understand that ourselves and there have been various reasons that could be attributed to it. A lot of work has not been done with respect to understanding what causes those deaths, but when you have multiple fatalities in single vehicle accidents, run-off-road accidents et cetera it can have a dramatic effect on the statistic overall.

It is as wide and varied as petrol prices and a whole range of things that have been taken into consideration as part of trying to understand our statistics, why the number of people who



have been killed on our roads has changed so dramatically over this period when we are all trying to make sure that it is going the opposite way.

**CHAIR** - You have not been able to determine any particular factor?

**Ms NICHOLLS** - No. The statistics that Bryan has shown us clearly indicate that all States, other than Victoria and the Northern Territory, are having some increase in the road toll and the national road toll within those January to May 2009 has increased by about 16 per cent compared to that same period last year. There are no clear answers as to why this is occurring. The fact is that there seems to be a national trend here indicating that there are some factors in play that are not specific to Tasmania. Whether people have a bit more money in their pockets maybe through the stimulus package, travelling more, or petrol prices being down, I just do not know; I am speculating.

**CHAIR** - Would you mind letting us have a copy of the information you were good enough to supply us?

**Ms NICHOLLS** - The information Bryan is referring to is on the RTSB web site. They have just released their May report, and we can table that but it is on the RTSB web site if you would like to read the full report.

**Mr GREEN** - I can read the bottom of the column. New South Wales increased by 35 per cent; Victoria dropped by 5.2 per cent; Queensland up by 16.5 per cent; South Australia up by 68.6 per cent; Western Australia up by 75 per cent; Tasmania up by 59.1 per cent; the Northern Territory down by 64 per cent; and the ACT up by 20 per cent.

**CHAIR** - And that is fatal and serious?

**Mr GREEN** - No, that is just fatal crashes.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Nationally they don't do comparative data for serious injuries, unfortunately.

**Mr GREEN** - As I have indicated, the council looks at serious crashes and serious injury crashes as the statistic that is of importance to us with respect to understanding whether we are having an impact.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Can I add that in Tasmania we have also had an increase in serious injuries and I understand other jurisdictions have had that as well. I have some figures here and as of 30 April and there were 127 serious injuries compared to 93 for the same period last year, so it's not only in fatalities but in serious injuries we are finding there is a hike. My understanding from talking to other jurisdictions, even though I don't have any data that I can table, is that they are also experiencing an increase there.

**CHAIR** - Would there be any advantage in combining your council with the Road Safety Taskforce so that you had one body focusing on the same issues?

**Mr GREEN** - The two bodies have clearly defined roles and I believe those roles are defined well enough to ensure that both bodies operate to concentrate on the areas of expertise they are good at.

**CHAIR** - I want to deal with a couple of specific issues. As to the overall speed limit of 110 kph, has the council given any consideration as to whether or not that should be lowered or retained?

**Mr GREEN** - What the council has done is sponsor, through our partnerships with local government in a couple of key areas - Kingborough is an example - lower speeds on rural roads and measuring the effectiveness of that change. Obviously lower speeds is a consideration in front of the council all the time. I think the great thing about the community road safety partnership approach, particularly when thinking about taking the community with you on the sorts of decisions we are talking about now, has been that there has been good feedback from the community with respect to the trials we have had at Kingborough and the Tasman Peninsula.

It is our expectation that the council will be in a position to make some decisions or recommendations based on that work. We want to continue to encourage local government and the community get involved in road safety as much as they possibly can. We had a forum on the north-west coast recently where community members and those participating as part of the community road safety partnership were involved. There were some really good ideas. We had the butcher's paper out - the standard method effectively - but it was interesting that consistently across the board safer speeds were identified as being an important part of ensuring that we lower the statistics with respect to serious crashes, and an understanding that lower speeds make a difference with respect to injuries if they occur. Of course Tasmania is decentralised, we have many regional country roads for the size of our population, and that is an important consideration for us as well. It was interesting to get that feedback from the north-west coast in particular with respect to those matters.

**Ms FORREST** - With the comment you made about the reduction of speed that is often raised, are you aware of any research or any evidence that would suggest that having a crash at 110 kph, whether it be a head-on with another vehicle travelling at 110 kph or a run-off-road where you run into a stationary object at 110 kph, would be any different or have less severe an impact on a body than at 100 kph?

**Mr GREEN** - I am advised that, yes, definitely, but there are also the issues -

**Ms FORREST** - Can you provide that evidence? We'd like to see that evidence to show that.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - I am not sure.

**CHAIR** - We haven't been able to get any dealings specifically with that.

**Mr GREEN** - But there are also issues associated with speeds when you're running into a person, and the slower speeds have been well advertised.

**Ms FORREST** - That's pedestrians; I'm talking about two vehicles.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, but there are also issues associated with speed and inattention and decision-making when travelling at high speed compared to slower speeds, and your

ability to rectify a situation travelling at slower speeds as opposed to faster speeds. All of those things need to be taken into consideration.

When you have a look at the statistics over the last 10 years of Tasmanian crash data, it has identified the following major crash types and factors when road users are involved. Run-off-road crashes account for 39 per cent and that's why I think our flexible barriers and the implementation of that are crucial with respect to having an effect on that statistic. Intersection crashes and road infrastructure best practice and our ability to look at black spots and roundabouts and other important traffic-calming measures, particularly around intersections, is important. Head-on crashes, 10 per cent; excessive speed, 12 per cent, inattention, 13 per cent; failure to wear seatbelts, 9 per cent. There was an increase in recent times with respect to -

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Yes, there has been an increase this year in failure to wear seatbelts.

**Mr GREEN** - Which is a very surprising statistic given that for most of us it is just second nature to put on your seat belt when travelling anywhere. Drink-driving, 9 per cent; young road-user crashes, 19 per cent; motorcycles, 15 per cent; and pedestrians, 11 per cent. The higher end with respect to run-off-road crashes, and so on, it is important that speed from that point of view is still front and centre when thinking about road safety matters.

**Ms FORREST** - In the last couple of years with the run-off-road crashes, the head-on crashes - not so much at intersections, but other highway crashes, perhaps, or open road crashes - where speed is a factor, is it generally a fact that the speed is well in excess of the posted speed limit in that location? Do you have those statistics?

**Ms NICHOLLS** - I don't have those statistics with me today.

**Ms FORREST** - Anecdotally that's what seems to be the case.

**Mr GREEN** - Excessive speed is the case, yes.

**Ms FORREST** - Do you mean excessive for the situation or excessive for the speed limit that's posted?

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Our stats keep two things: crashes caused by going beyond the speed limit and also the causal factor of excessive speed for the conditions. So through our traffic accident reports that the police provide we break down those two issues as causal factors.

**CHAIR** - You mentioned a short time ago the importance of taking the community with you on decisions, and I think you'd agree that if the community sees road rules as being reasonable, they are more likely to observe them and respect them. How do you feel about the speed limit between Pontville and Brighton, 60 kph, with hardly any houses with access to the road, and in the northern section of Campbell Town, which used to be 80 until about four or five years ago when it was decreased to 60, a wide section of road, wide nature strip, hardly any pedestrians? Do you think there should be some re-evaluation of some speed limits so that the majority of the community perceive them to be reasonable? I just mention those as examples. Cleveland is another one.

**Ms FORREST** - No, it has suddenly changed to 80.

**CHAIR** - There was a concern that it had been reduced from 110 to 90, and in the last couple of weeks it has gone down to 80, and there was concern at 90.

**Ms FORREST** - And the road has just been done up through there when it was at 90, and now it has been reduced to 80. The road has just been completely resealed, all that section, and now it has been reduced.

**CHAIR** - Do you know how these decisions are made, and do you think there should be some changes?

**Ms FORREST** - Didn't you notice that when you drove through this week?

**Mr GREEN** - Of course I did.

**Mr DEAN** - You probably will do in a week's time.

**Ms FORREST** - When the happy snap comes through.

**Mr GREEN** - Mr Chairman, I have heard you talking about this in the past, and I have to say that I disagree. I think regarding the decisions with respect to speeds in and around urban areas, particularly on one of the major thoroughfares, the Midland Highway as it is approaching Campbell Town, for example, it is crucial that people slow down to 60, and in fact it is 50 through the centre of the shopping zone there now. Between Brighton and Pontville that area has built up significantly in recent times, and you won't have long to wait, obviously, because we will be bypassing that area. The upshot is that there are schools in that vicinity, and there has been a lot of urban development out towards Pontville, so I would be an advocate for slower speeds through that area, and in fact I would be an advocate for slower speeds in most areas, most urban areas. I think there is a good case right at the moment to lower the 60 zones in and around most urban areas to 50.

**CHAIR** - Do you think you would take the community with you on your views in that way in relation to the northern section of Campbell Town, Cleveland, Pontville and Brighton?

**Mr GREEN** - I would certainly take the community of Campbell Town with me. I am not sure, because there are other people advocating a different position, but in my humble opinion most people, if they applied the same logic to themselves and where they live, would agree.

**CHAIR** - When that decision was made to reduce 80 to 60 at Campbell Town, we were told, in answer to a question in the House, that one person had complained about 80 and it went down to 60. The council weren't even consulted, and weren't really very impressed at that time. Nor were the community with that decision at that time.

**Mr GREEN** - I would always be an advocate for consultation, and if that happened, well, that probably shouldn't have happened that way. I would also ask the committee to think about other areas where the community has been taken with us through community road

safety partnerships, and the Whose Guest Tonight? which was established in Burnie has been a very good example of where the community has been taken along, particularly young people, with respect to the community getting involved in road safety issues. So speed is important. I have used the analogy with workplace safety. It took a long time for people to understand, both companies and individuals, their responsibility in the workplace with respect to making sure they were safe, they were looking after their work mates and the businesses were looking after each and every person by ensuring their work areas were as safe as they possibly could be. It is not easy to change people's behaviour. I am a good example. I am sure we all are to a degree. It is very difficult to change people's behaviour, but what we have to do is just make sure that we continue to strive to do that, so that people have a different view about the roads with respect to how they travel.

**Mr DEAN** - Regarding the areas to which the Chairman refers, having regard to what the mainland are now doing with all of their variable speed limit signs and so on, do you think the council would be supportive of more variable speed limit signs here in Tasmania? The examples given are very good cases where a variable speed limit sign could be wonderful, I would have thought. Coming through Pontville there on Monday night at 10 p.m., there wasn't another car on the road, and the number of vehicles that would do 60 would be nil, I would suggest. Except me. I was the only one doing 60.

**CHAIR** - I came along the next morning doing the same.

**Mr DEAN** - Do you support the variable speed limit signs?

**Mr GREEN** - I do not think that it has been raised with us.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Not if you are drawing attention to what Victoria do. In Melbourne they have the variable speed signs everywhere. What we are funding through the road safety levy are some advisory signs. Some advisory signs are going up shortly at Constitution Hill as part of the work that is happening there. The council have recently approved as a project for the 2009-10 financial year weather stations similar to Constitution Hill be fixed on the Huon Highway and some advisory signs are going in as part of that.

Rolling the advisory signs out to something similar to what Victoria has done, there have not been any specific discussions there but that is not to say that when the council looks at its second action plan, which will come into effect for the 2010-11 financial year, we will not consider issues like that.

Coming back to speed, can I just put some facts back on the table. Travel speeds just 5 kilometres above the limit in urban areas and 10 kph above in rural areas doubles the risk of a casualty crash. Even something like a 1 kilometre reduction in average speed limits leads to a 2 to 3 per cent reduction in injury crashes.

**CHAIR** - Could you let us have the statistics on that?

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Yes, that is research that is well evidenced.

**Ms FORREST** - Regarding the 100 and above speed, though, does that research -

**Ms NICHOLLS** - No, I do not believe so.

**Mr GREEN** - I will ask Bruce Corbin. Did you ask him that specific question?

**CHAIR** - I do not think that we did.

**Mr GREEN** - I will certainly ask him and get something out of him with respect to that matter.

**Ms FORREST** - Does the Road Safety Council have an opinion at this time regarding the west coast roads in light of the fact that rail is under threat at the moment where the trucks have to cart the ore and minerals out of that region? What is the Road Safety Council's view on managing road safety in that scenario?

**Mr GREEN** - Through you, Mr Chairman - with all due respect to the member, I do not think that it would be responsible for me to try to answer that question on behalf of the Road Safety Council given that we have had no discussion on that matter.

**Ms FORREST** - Do you think that they would see it as an issue?

**Mr GREEN** - It is something that would be considered from a speed point of view or other issues that might come to the fore but not as policy point of view given that -

**Ms FORREST** - Given that the road, as we know, is not designed for those sort of truck movements, there are no passing lanes, there is only one slow vehicle turnout bay that is the most disgraceful set-up I have ever seen in my life - it is so short it ends on the brow of a hill and you cannot see what is coming over the top -

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, but you are making the assumption that rail is not going to operate.

**Ms FORREST** - But surely, we have 13 days to the end of the month.

**Mr GREEN** - I am sure if it comes to the fore of the Road Safety Council, if there is an appropriate context for us to consider it in, we would consider it but that is a little too specific and we have had no discussion so I could not answer on behalf of the council. I would only be answering on behalf of myself.

**CHAIR** - On another subject, we have had a considerable body of evidence supporting the advisability of learner drivers being required to undertake a course of instruction in road safety. Some people favour driver training as being part of that but at least advice about road safety matters. Does your council have an opinion on that subject?

**Mr GREEN** - It is something that we considered at length as part of the strategic plan and there have been implementation phases in recent times with respect to our strategy, and Penny will talk about that.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - The council is committed to introduce very much target evidence-based initiatives to achieve the best possible reduction that we can get in casualty crashes. Defensive or advanced driver training has not been proven to reduce casualty crash risk. Research shows that driver attitude is more important to reducing crash risk than gaining

additional driving skills and it is better from our perspective to implement research-based measures for young drivers that are proven to be effective. I know that I have provided previously, I do not know if it was to this committee or to Council members as part of budget Estimates committees previously, some of the research that has supported that view that we've drawn from research. So I am happy to resubmit some of that documentation.

**CHAIR** - Do you feel that the fact that research does not show that it is of any advantage is due to the fact that driver education training has hardly happened?

**Ms FORREST** - Research does not separate that defensive driving and the advanced driving.

**CHAIR** - No, I am talking about driver education. It has never been compulsory, as we can determine, for learner drivers to undertake a course of instruction. I am certainly not talking about advanced driving and not even driving but some course of instruction where they are shown films about the risks of taking certain action and how -

**Ms FORREST** - Driver attitude.

**CHAIR** - to deal with certain situations and that all helps attitudes, as well as equipping them much better. Because there have not been courses like that, it seems obvious research will not show that they have not necessarily been effective.

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Yes, that is true. You will be aware of the road risk reduction resource, that DIER is instructing, and paying for teachers to be instructed, from year 9, year 10 and above. Previously we have provided information to you in relation to that material which deals with the attitude.

**CHAIR** - I would suggest that it is logical that if learner drivers undertake a course of instruction, carefully planned, whether it involves driver training or not, it is bound to have some beneficial effect. Isn't that obvious?

**Ms FORREST** - So, Mr Chairman, you are suggesting a course that includes driver attitude information. Is that is what you are talking about?

**CHAIR** - Attitude and how to deal with risk and what do in a skid and how to drive on country roads. Things that are not taught to most learner drivers now.

**Mr DEAN** - How to pass a vehicle?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - How to identify a risk and what risks are out there.

**CHAIR** - All such matters. Isn't that bound to improve driver attitude and capacity to deal with various road situations?

**Ms NICHOLLS** - We believe that you have to balance this issue of over-confidence and where you can increase that risk of young drivers. We have introduced our graduated system and the new assessment tests will come into place from the end of July this year.

Through that, we are testing some high-water skills and the readiness, particularly the new test that would be done at the end of L1 assessment into the P1 assessment. There will be some high-water skills and some hazard perception that we will be testing as part of that new assessment.

At the end of the day, what is really important is the time that someone spends on the road and with the new learner provisions, as you would be aware, we have in place now a three-month minimum period for being in L1 and a nine-month period for L2. So time on the road is very important in terms of developing skills.

**CHAIR** - I agree with that but wouldn't the testing be more successful if it follows teaching? How can you test if they are not taught?

**Ms NICHOLLS** - Okay. There are a couple of things that are happening at the moment. As you are aware, the Federal Government has provided some funding for a trial that is currently under way here in Tasmania which is called the Keys to Drive which is a free lesson that a learner can attend with their supervisor to receive some tuition during that learning period. We have also just recently republished our supervisor, driver handbook and, as I said, in relation to the young people, what we are doing is training teachers to, within the schools and particularly targeting the pre-learner period, discuss with the children in a classroom situation the risks of driving in an attempt to have them better appreciate the fact that having a driver's licence is not a right, it is a privilege, and through those mechanisms trying to shape positive attitudes.

**CHAIR** - That is a good start.

**Mr DEAN** - The committee has taken a lot of evidence on drink-driving, drug-driving and it has been suggested to us that we should consider reducing to 0.03 or to zero for drivers. Does the council have a position on this and have you espoused that position?

**Mr GREEN** - We have had lengthy discussions with respect to blood-alcohol limits and at this stage the council has made no recommendations. We have a nationally-consistent position with respect to blood-alcohol limits, as I understand it, and I think it would be something that needs to be done at a national level to make any change.

**CHAIR** - And that accords with most of the evidence we've had. It's only been suggested by a very small number of people. Generally, what you're saying has been the attitude.

**Mr GREEN** - Quite seriously, the worry has been that in recent times we have seen people exceeding the blood-alcohol limit and people involved in fatal crashes have exceeded the limit, which is a terrible worry.

**Ms FORREST** - Has the tag driving system that was at Agfest that they are using in Dubai and other parts of the world - it is a system that fits in a container that drivers can transport around, so learner drivers can have experience in a vehicle in a simulated environment - been considered as an option for learner drivers?

**Ms NICHOLLS** - As you are aware, I had a look at it at Agfest. At this stage I am just interested in the research. I haven't had an opportunity to get my head across what that is. I have had personal experience with the simulators.



**CHAIR** - Mr Green and Ms Nicholls, thank you very much for giving us your time and information. We appreciate your help and wish you well in your important roles in the Road Safety Council.

**DISCUSSION CONCLUDED.**